

Disability Now

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Society responds to Government review boards

Major recommendations

The Supplementary Benefit system, both the basic scale rates and the additional allowances, are totally inadequate to meet the needs of disabled people.

What is needed is a comprehensive disability income and costs allowance.*

In lieu of that, the Government should increase the basic scale rate and also the allowances, since they do not reflect the true additional costs of disability.

These views were submitted last month by The Spastics Society to the Government teams who are currently reviewing Supplementary and Child Benefits. They are based on evidence collected from disabled people, parents and professionals.

The Society labelled as "iniquitous" the "loss of faculty" test based on the Industrial Injuries Scale for the new Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA). It thinks the scale is inappropriate for assessing degrees of disability in people suffering the range and mixture of handicaps associated with cerebral palsy. Because they may fail the test, more people will be forced to rely on the inadequate Supplementary Benefit system.

In view of this, the Government should "as a matter of urgent priority" identify and monitor the circumstances and incomes of disabled people.

The Society estimates that there are more than 400,000 disabled adults and 206,000 children.

While the proposed survey of disabled people is welcomed, it must include the numbers and needs of disabled children, says the Society, if it is to accurately assess and cater for future needs.

The Society pointed to the low take-up of benefits and pressed the Government to spend more money on publicity, advice and information about additional allowances. The Society itself is preparing a poster and a guide to help parents claim benefits for children.

Also in the submission...

● The age limit of assessment-free claims for SDA should be raised to 25. "The present age limit of 20 years is too low and could act as a disincentive to young disabled people to join a Youth Training Scheme or go on to further education."

● People already on Supplementary Benefit because of incapacity for work should be automatically passported to SDA after 52 weeks. "This would not add anything to the social security bill, but would give many disabled people a right to a non-means-tested benefit."

● Child Benefit should be increased, but not via means-testing. Abolishing the Married Man's Tax Allowance could provide the money.

● Family Fund applications should be raised to 19 years because disabled young people often need more time than able-bodied youngsters to complete their education.

● 16-year-olds and upwards should be eligible for Supplementary Benefit. This would help families strained by the expenses of a disabled young adult.

● Pregnant women on Supplementary Benefit should receive a basic diet addition and after the baby is born they should have a higher rate heating addition for 6 months.

● Mobility Allowance should be widened to include anyone who is seriously immobile for either a physical or mental reason. There should be no upper age limit.

● Trust funds set aside for the support of disabled people should be disregarded for the purposes of Supplementary Benefit; so should redundancy payments and occupational pension lump sums.

● Heating addition upratings should be increased in line with the Retail Price Index or fuel prices, whichever is higher, and heating additions awarded on the grounds of disability should be exempt from the available scale margin reductions.

After considering reports of the review teams, the Government will publish a White or Green Paper in the spring.

*See *The Spastics Society's Pre-Budget Submission, February 1983*. Copies of this and the submissions on Supplementary Benefits and Child Benefits are available from Linda Avery, Lobbying Department. Tel: 01-636 5020 ext. 205

Neath Hill decision

The Neath Hill Professional Workshop in Milton Keynes is to continue.

It will have 4 functions: to offer professional development to disabled people who work there; to be an information resource; to provide training in the form of short and medium-length courses; and to be a business facility which will build up the experience of partners and contribute to the financial viability of the unit.

A new staff structure is to be established and a sales manager will be appointed.

The Executive Council approved policy objectives recommended by the Director of Social Services in July.

★ Neath Hill has been awarded a special certificate by Apple Computer (UK) for exceeding Apple's targets by over £13,000 in their "Share in our Success" Dealer Sales Plan for January to March.



A drop in the ocean

Faced with 86 applicants for residential places, 15 of them school-leavers from its own schools, The Spastics Society has been urgently trying to find extra accommodation suitable for profoundly handicapped people.

Approval has now been given by the Executive Council for Chiltern House, formerly a family help unit in Oxford, to be used as a residential home for 8 school leavers. Renamed Jack Howarth House, it will open in November.

Part of the plan is to provide individual assessment, and education and training 7 days a week.

Residents will attend a day facility in the grounds of Churchill Hospital, which is being handed over to the Society, along with a donation of £39,000, by the Oxfordshire Spastics Welfare Society.

The Stars Organisation for Spastics has agreed to contribute at least £35,000, mainly from collections at Pontins camp with which Jack Howarth was associated.

Most of the money will be spent on re-equipping the day centre with appropriate modern

equipment including computer aids suitable for severely handicapped people.

Negotiations are going on with the Health Authority and Oxfordshire County Council so that 8 handicapped people resident in the Oxford area can also benefit from the day facility.

"We hope to show the local authorities that the Society can provide a specialised day service which will complement their own", said John Tizard, Principal Research and Development Officer. "We are encouraged by the positive response that we have received".

Families looking for short-term help might question the change of purpose for Chiltern House. "We are confident that we can continue to meet the needs of families who have used Chiltern House for short term care at our two existing hotels and in facilities within the Society or operated by other agencies", said John Tizard.

"It is hoped that the remaining 7 school leavers will be catered for within our centres", he added. "Each individual will be placed in the most appropriate setting."

Society made a managing agency

The Manpower Services Commission has appointed The Spastics Society as a National Managing Agency for their Community Programme.

Although arrangements have yet to be finalised, the agency should be allocated around 200 places and will be operational by the end of this month.

The Society is an independent sponsor on a number of MSC schemes and a Managing Agency for 1 year on a 50-place scheme in Cleveland.

But a sponsor has to hope that the Managing Agent will provide enough money to run the scheme it plans. Now the Society can act as both agent and sponsor and has more flexibility in controlling the finances on its schemes all over the country.

The MSC will meet the wages of workers and most of the running costs of each scheme.

The Spastics Society may be one of the last organisations to be appointed a National Management Agency by the MSC since there are now very few places left to be allocated on the Community Programme.

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Some may be able to stay at home.

"For others, we are trying to find alternative homes and centres", said Jim Armstrong, Residential and Day Care Services Manager of the Society.

"We are determined to keep these people out of long stay hospitals" he said. "This is a Society priority".



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Letters to the Editor

Disability Now 12 Park Crescent London W1N 4EQ

A disturbing admission

I have just finished reading your somewhat alarming footnote to the letter of Ms A Young in the July issue of *Disability Now*.

I find it most disturbing that an organization which is meant to be the foremost exponent in raising society's awareness of the needs and capabilities of spastics does not know how many it has in its own employ.

May we please have a statement of The Spastics Society's policy on the employment of spastics within its own organization.

Will you also provide a breakdown of the number of spastics (excluding sheltered workshop employees) employed in relation to the total number of employees, the jobs they do, the hours worked, and an indication of the remuneration they receive for those jobs so that one is able to see how the policy is carried out.

John R Per

82 Oban Street

Poplar, E14 OHZ.

It is difficult for any employer to give accurate details of the number of disabled people em-

ployed. Often people do not wish to divulge this information.

The Society currently employs about 133 cerebral palsied people in professional, clerical, light manufacturing and ancillary posts. The terms and conditions of employment, including salary and hours of work, for those in open employment (16) are in accordance with those negotiated by the National Joint Council for Local Authorities (NJCL). For those employed in Sheltered Industrial Groups (SIGs) (22), the terms and conditions conform to those of the host firm, in negotiation with Manpower Services Commission.

In respect of Meadway (95), two thirds of the disabled employees are housed in subsidized accommodation at Broadstones hostel, and this is reflected in the current wage rates. As we move towards improving the commercial performance of the unit and as business improves, the rates of the entire work force will be reviewed against market rates for comparable work with the hope of bringing them into line where they are not already competitive - Jill Carne, Personnel Manager.

The Spastics Society Statement on the employment of disabled people

"The Society supports the requirement for companies to disclose their policy on the employment of disabled people. For many years the Society has provided employment for disabled people at its industrial units and has provided assessment and training and developed practical aids to facilitate their employment.

Apart from these special provisions, the Society has a policy for the employment and integration of suitably qualified disabled people within its own workforce. Such individuals are assessed according to how their talents, skills and capabilities match the requirements of the work available.

Depending on their skills and abilities, disabled staff have the same career prospects and opportunities for promotion as other employees of the Society and the scope for realising their full potential within the working structure of the Society.

In addition, it is the Society's policy to adapt the working environment, where appropriate, to make it possible for disabled people to work.

Special attention is paid to training and other needs of anyone who becomes disabled while employed by the Society, including redeployment to other work where necessary and appropriate."

Same meeting?

I read with some interest the various accounts of activities during the 15th World Congress of Rehabilitation International in Lisbon (July issue) and began to wonder if they were in fact describing the same meeting which I myself had attended.

It is perhaps somewhat surprising to find that pieces written by those running a Society concerned with cerebral palsy should make no mention whatsoever of a whole day seminar on the subject organised within the Congress by the International Cerebral Palsy Society and Dr Maria Andrada, Director of The Portuguese Spastics Society, which discussed the "Primary Prevention of Cerebral Palsy."

Papers were given on genetic counselling and prevention of handicaps in a developing country; pre-natal care, obstetrics and nutrition; new born behaviour and early mother/child interaction; perinatal care in a developing country - problems and solutions for prevention and adverse factors; early detection in a developing country; and the "Save a Baby Campaign" of The Spastics Society in England. This last paper was the only one given, I believe, in the entire Congress which described any of the work of The Spastics Society.

We experienced none of the organisation problems described but had "standing room only" throughout the entire lively day in Hall G.

Anita Loring

Secretary General ICPS

Since we do not have the resources to cover international meetings ourselves, we rely on the delegates to let us know what went on in their field - Editor

What of choice?

Many thanks to Joanna Beazley-Richards for her letter about integration (July issue) in which she emphasizes choice.

It was not my intention to suggest that there should be only one kind of post-16 provision, but rather to draw into the open factors which influence the choice of school or college which are presently covert. Political and economic pressures need to be understood.

Take, for example, the process of writing a statement under the regulations of the '81 Act. As I understand the situation, professional people of all kinds are expected to contribute to a description of the educational needs of the child. Once this information has been written into a statement, the LEA is obliged by law to make appropriate provision either within its own resources or by buying the service from elsewhere.

Since the available services in an authority are known to the professionals concerned and since they are also aware of the financial constraints within which their LEA is working, statements are being written which do not enumerate the educational need of the child but reflect the provision already in existence. What then of choice?

Is it not also non-sensical that the one thing which needs to be discussed by all - which school or college can meet the need - is not open for comment in the recommendations made?

I hope someone will reply to this letter and tell me I have it wrong.

John H Hall

Principal

Dene College

Shipbourne Road

Tonbridge TN11 9NT

VICE-CHAIRMAN

What are we doing for the school leaver?

by Derek Ashcroft



Derek Ashcroft

I am sure you all appreciate that *Hamlet* is made up of famous quotations and that it was Shakespeare's genius which transformed them into a play. I am not aiming so high but I would like to take two quotations and turn them into a plea.

The late Ernest Williment had a favourite label - "The Group in the Middle". He used it to draw attention to those ageing disabled people left at home with elderly parents who were often finding it difficult to cope; a group who were in the main so handicapped that they were unable to enter either open or sheltered employment, and for whom little provision was available.

Their need was strongly emphasised in the 1980 Regions Working Party report, and thanks to the Blue Peter Appeal and others a start has been made to help them.

I would like to apply the label to a more chronological group in the middle - "The Young Adult".

My job as a schoolmaster makes me very conscious of the frustrations suffered by what we call the normal young school-leaver. How much more frustrating must it be for those who have already suffered discrimination in the employment field because of their disability when they can see even fewer chances of a rewarding life ahead.

I have tried as Vice-Chairman to visit as many centres as possible and talk to as many people as possible to get the feel as to where we should be heading. Time after time the cry has been, "What are we doing for the school-leaver?"

There are, I am sure, lots of schemes where individual groups are doing their best. But we need to publicise the problem, to share our expertise and experience and if possible to collaborate.

We have an educational system both within the Society and in the State's special schools which has tried to stimulate and develop the potential skills latent in us all.

Our colleges of further education such as Beaumont and Dene are doing wonderful work. But what is the future for the students who have worked their way through the system? Can we just send them back to an environment where they cannot use the skills they have acquired?

This is not a new problem, but again, as Ernest Williment said, "unless we bring the fruits of our discussion and planning within touching distance of those we serve we shall have failed miserably".

Let me tell you about the Brighton, Hove & District Group's school-leavers' project, not because it is better than any others but because I know a bit more about it.

There had been a very successful nursery and children's centre at Hamilton House for over 20 years; but suddenly there were no more children.

Local Government provision and Save a Baby had meant that it was no longer a viable concern. So in 1981 the project was started. It is for those people with a moderate physical handicap who have no immediate prospect of employment. It aims to make them more independent as individuals, and to give them work skills and experience to cope more effectively with the problems they face in everyday life.

But if schemes like this are to continue and be viable, they need considerable input - both money, and course-leaders who can stimulate young men and women who have "had enough" of the classroom. Should this charge on money and skills be met by one group or met by several? And will there be sufficient takers? Whom do we have to persuade - prospective students; their parents (often the main stumbling block); local authorities? There is no doubt that the need is there and that there are sufficient young disabled people around who could benefit.

Another category that concerns me are those that have moved on from school to our residential centres. They are being physically looked after and are, I hope, being provided for to the best of our limited resources. But is it to the best of our ability?

Where work centres are attached it is getting more and more difficult to find a range of stimulating work. The ingenuity and persistence of our workshop managers ought to win them an "Award for Industry", but in many cases we see a larger proportion of the work-time being taken up by leisure pursuits. This is good up to a point. But I remember the joy on one man's face when he showed us round the greenhouses at Kyre Park for which he was responsible. There was job satisfaction.

So let's hear from some of these centres with ideas and positive experience. All this training can lead to the provision of "real work", whether in full-time or sheltered employment.

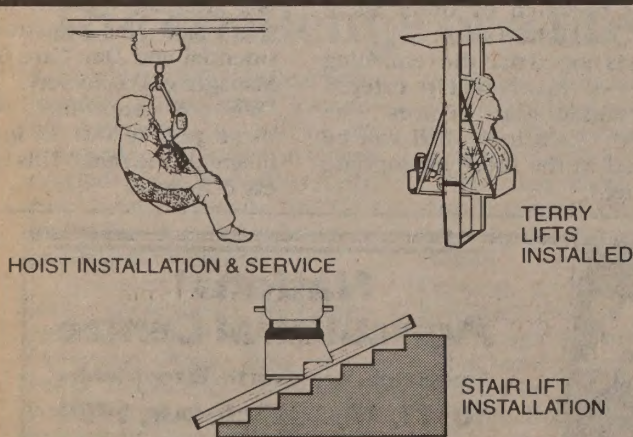
I was so interested to hear about the Sheltered Industrial Groups at last year's AGM that I asked John Herridge, the County Organiser for Hertfordshire, to come and spread the gospel at a South-East Regional Meeting.

Hopefully the news that we have been nominated as a National Agency for the Manpower Services Commission's Community Programme will provide a spark which will spread across all regions.

The involvement of so many disabled people in various consumer groups has brought a new spirit of determination. They were "The Group in the Middle" once.

Ken Coulbeck was one of those to start the ball rolling. Hopefully I've given it a kick further towards a goal. Anyone else want to come and play?

HOISTS AND LIFTS



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Perhaps the most important thing to appreciate about the *Charity Statistics*, published in July by the Charities Aid Foundation, is how much is missing.

Any analysis of charitable activity described in purely financial terms is bound to understate the amount of effort marshalled by voluntary organisations. The grand totals of charitable income (over £7 billion in 1982/3) and expenditure take no account of the voluntary or "free" manpower which charities are able to attract.

In the case of The Spastics Society this incalculable effort comes in many forms - voluntary carers in our centres, helpers in our shops, door-to-door collectors, staff committed to working beyond the call of normal duty, honorary officers and committee members. It is part of the efficiency of a charity and on any table of financial statistics it remains concealed. You have to try to look behind the statistics to understand what is going on. To be fair, the CAF helps the reader to do this.

"The public is getting meaner", or "Sharp drop in private donations to charities" suggested some headlines in July when the statistics were published. Can it be true?

Well, I really doubt that individual members of the public have become tight-fisted despite the published estimate that income from donations fell by 40 per cent (after adjusting for inflation) between 1975/76 and 1980/81.

Dr. John Posnett points out in his paper "A Profile of the Charity Sector" (included in the CAF *Charity Statistics 1983/84*) that there were 16,000 charities newly registered in that period, and while few of them can have quickly established any large-scale fund-raising organisation, many may have been helped to their feet with an early grant from a local authority or may have charged for most of their services. So the character of the statistical sample could have changed quite significantly.

Also, remember that that period was not a good one for industry. Trusts, foundations and many charities can depend sub-

Vital Statistics?

Don't take what the Charities Aid Foundation says at face value, warns Andrew Ross, Marketing Director of The Spastics Society

stantially on corporate profits amongst their "donations", and profits did not grow in line with the retail price index at the end of the seventies.

Certainly, experience at The Spastics Society does not bear out the suggestion that individuals are getting meaner. For several years now, our voluntary income (received from many thousands of supporters) has grown ahead of inflation. This year looks particularly encouraging: the response to our Spring direct mail appeal is 25 per cent better than last year and will top £600,000.

Our legacy income, another major source of funds, is also well ahead of budget and up to the end of July we have had a 12 per cent increase in the number of legacies notified to us.

The purpose of a set of statistics is to enable the people who study them to take better decisions. Much is made of the

league tables of grant-giving and grant-seeking bodies but there is little value in knowing who is top of the pops.

It may give The Society a vaguely comfortable feeling to see that we are the fifth largest charity in terms of total charitable expenditure (where would we stand if we added expenditure by the Scottish Council and by local Groups as well?) but it doesn't help us to do our job better.

Our goal of providing as much as we can for disabled people and their families is not really comparable with that of the National Trust or Nuffield Nursing Homes or Oxfam.

Yet we can learn a good deal from the statistics. They show us the trends and shifts in sources of income and distribution of expenditure so that we can compare our own performance with general experience in the charitable "market place". For inst-



Nigel Tuckett

ance, will we one day emulate the huge success of some of the older charities like the Red Cross or the RNIB in attracting legacy income? What special approach has been used by third world charities like Action Aid and Oxfam to obtain so many donations under Deed of Covenant?

This latest edition of the CAF's *Charity Statistics* emphasises the growth in charities' income from fees and charges, in large part paid by local authorities. Dr. Posnett's study indicates a tremendous increase of 167 per cent between 1975 and 1980. Our charts show that The Spastics Society's income reflects this pronounced trend.

The CAF statistics also show that there has been a large shift in the relative roles of central and local government as far as the voluntary sector is concerned. In the mid-1970s local authority payments to charities were four times as large as cen-

tral government grants; now it seems the ratio is only two to one.

We have already seen evidence of this in our fund-raising (e.g. DHSS matching grants for Beech Tree North) and it underlines the growing weight of responsibility on those specialists who help us communicate with Westminster and Whitehall.

There is plenty of debate about the balance of responsibility between the public and voluntary sectors. When is it our job, when should it be theirs? Is there some magic point when dependency on funding from the taxpayer can jeopardise the spirit of voluntary action and the trust which our voluntary donors and helpers place with us? The National Council for Voluntary Organisations felt the issue was serious enough to issue a code on charities' relations with Government in March.

The lines are very blurred, particularly in our field of specialist care and social service.

Local authorities buy the services which we manage while the NHS manages hospitals which invariably depend on some voluntary effort. A local authority social worker or teacher or NHS midwife will often work in off-duty hours in the best interests of those he or she serves.

In our field it becomes hard to attach any lasting validity to the conventional distinctions between public and private, professional and amateur, staff and volunteer. We are all in the business of serving as best we can.

I may have strayed from the statistical point but it is what happens behind and underneath the figures that really matters.

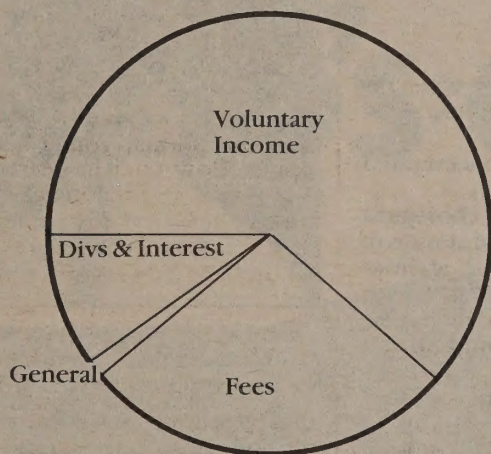
I commend the CAF *Charity Statistics* for the growing breadth of their approach and thus for posing many more questions about how charities operate, also for the honesty of many cautionary notes in interpreting the figures.

The CAF is attempting to draw a picture which is very complex and unlikely to be wholly accurate. But the attempt is welcome.

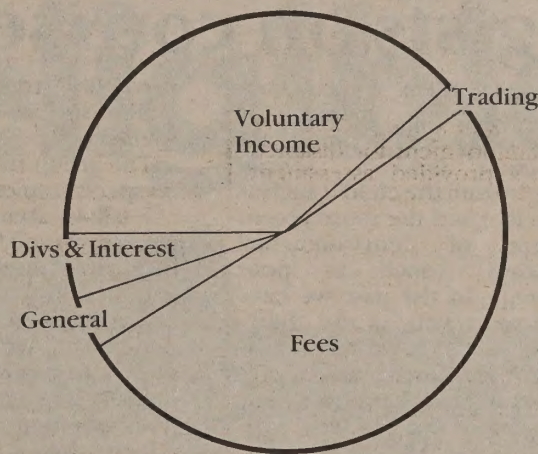
Charity Statistics 1982/3 published by the Charities Aid Foundation, 48 Pembury Road, Tonbridge, Kent. Price £9.00

Comparison of The Spastics Society's Income

1973 total: £5,508k



1983 total: £24,454k



MONTH IN PARLIAMENT



HOUSE OF LORDS

continued from last month

Health and Social Security

Two important amendments were moved with the backing of The Spastics Society during the report stage of the Health and Social Security Bill on 10 July.

Lord Stallard attempted to raise the age exemption of reassessments under the new Severe Disablement Allowance from 20 to 23. He quoted evidence from The Spastics Society showing that many young people do go on to further education or training, and The Society's concern that the low exemption age would deter them from doing so.

Peers from all sides of The House sought to have some flexibility written into the Bill. However, the Government was

not prepared to go beyond its promise of monitoring the new scheme. The amendment was narrowly defeated by 13 votes. Independent and Government Peers joined the Opposition in the "Content lobby."

In a new clause, Baroness Gardner of Parkes (Conservative), moved that Invalid Care Allowance should be extended to married women. She stressed the important role that married women carers play in community care and spoke of the hardship, both emotional and financial, which is often experienced by carers who are unable to claim the Carer's Allowance. Baroness Parkes was supported by Peers from all sides of The House when she urged the Government to make this issue a priority.

On behalf of the Government, the Earl of Caithness said that he was satisfied that the Govern-

ment was not breaching the new EEC directive on the equal treatment of men and women, which will come into force in January 1985. The Government was sympathetic but resources prevented them from acting.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

More wheelchairs...

In a parliamentary question on 24 July, Alf Morris MP asked Tony Newton MP, Minister for the Disabled, if the DHSS had any plans to extend the range of NHS wheelchairs available to disabled people.

Tony Newton outlined the Department's range of wheelchairs which includes some 70 non-powered and 10 powered models. He said that the situation is continually under review.

The working party examining the services of the Department's Artificial Limb and Appliances Centres will consider the present categories of wheelchairs.

...and equipment?

In a parliamentary question to Tony Newton on 1 August, Lewis Carter-Jones MP asked whether there were any plans to provide more up-to-date environmental control equipment for very severely disabled people.

Tony Newton emphasised his department's concern that supply of equipment to severely dis-

The Spastics Society's fringe meetings during the party conferences

(Subject for discussion: "Discrimination - another handicap! Should it be against the law?")

SDP

Monday, 10 September
12.45 pm - 2.15 pm
The Spastics Society
Buxton Centre
The Bedford
34 St Johns Road
Buxton, Derbyshire
Chairman
Bill Hargreaves
Executive Council,
The Spastics Society

LABOUR

Tuesday, 2 October
5.30 pm - 7.00 pm
Circle Annexe, Winter Gardens
Church Street
Blackpool
Chairman
John Tizard, The Spastics Society
Speakers
Jack Ashley MP
Gerald Kaufman MP
Alf Morris MP
Bob Wareing MP

LIBERAL

Thursday, 20 September
6.15 pm - 7.45 pm
Savoy Hotel, Westhill Road
Bournemouth
Chairman
Ron Gerver, former Chairman of
The Spastics Society's Consumer
Group
Speakers
Paddy Ashdown MP
Michael Meadowcroft MP

CONSERVATIVE

Thursday, 11 October
12.45 - 2.15 pm
The Bedford Hotel
Kings Road, Brighton
Chairman
Ron Gerver
Speakers
John Hannam MP
Peter Large, Chairman, the
CORAD Committee
Tony Newton MP
Tim Yeo MP

abled people should take advantage of the latest developments. The DHSS will be preparing a minimum performance requirement for a versatile environmental control with an integral communication facility, he said. This might be connected to additional equipment for users seeking

opportunities in education or employment.

Invitations to tender for the development of this equipment will be issued towards the end of this year.

Amanda Jordan
Sharron Saint Michael

REPORTS

Alternative Lifestyles Course

New angles and new activities

Last April, 19 cerebral palsied adults and 5 Society staff gathered at Hereward College in Coventry for the start of a 3-day course organised by the Careers and Advisory Section of The Spastics Society.

People from all over England had been invited because they were known to share the problems of unemployment and mild to moderate disability.

The first evening was spent discussing how people structure their time and how satisfying they find their present lifestyles.

The following day, there were optional activities. Each person chose a morning and afternoon option from a range which included horse-riding, computers, art and craft, cookery, swimming, creative writing, chess, photography and gardening.

These proved a tremendous success and gave many people the opportunity to sample an activity they had never attempted before and might continue.

Maria Brooks, from the Neath Hill Professional Workshop, stressed that severely disabled

people could engage in sporting activities. She told us that her own successes and her involvement in the Milton Keynes Sport & Leisure Association for the Disabled (which she founded) had helped her to make friends and lead a happier life.

Gill Talbot spoke about her struggle to lead an independent life in her own flat. She showed us the importance of being outgoing and warned of sitting alone in a brand new flat "waiting for the world to come to you."

On Wednesday morning the course members divided into two groups to air their views on relationships and independence.

Among the problems raised were how to achieve some emotional independence when parents still want to be over-protective; how to form meaningful relationships when you suffer from a speech disorder; and how to avoid being over-sensitive about physical disability.

The final morning was arranged by Sue Kendall, The Society's Information and Volunteer Officer. Speakers from voluntary organisations like the Samaritans, Age Concern and the RSPCA explained how disabled people can take part in voluntary work.

Then Pam Shearman from the charity CRYPT (Creative Young People Together) based in

Chichester told how her organisation provides young people with bungalow accommodation for two or three years in order to allow them to develop and find a market for their artistic skills.

At the end of the course each person received an information pack and a questionnaire. One course member spoke for many when he wrote—

"What did I enjoy least? — GOING HOME!"

Doreen Hinchliffe
Careers Advisory Officer
The Spastics Society

VOCAL AGM

Pressing for more speech therapy

The Government now admits that the proposed Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), cause of much anxiety and suspicion, was proposed without sufficient time for proper consultation. Lord Campbell of Croy (Conservative) made this statement while speaking as a Vice President at the 3rd AGM of VOCAL held in July.

He went on to argue, however, that the new Bill was a step forward as it abolished the old Household Duties Test and replaced it with a much fairer and more flexible approach to allowances, including periodic assessment.

VOCAL is an independent charity which brings together the College of Speech Therapists and 26 voluntary organisations concerned with people who have a communication handicap. It aims to further the cause of the communication handicapped; to lobby for the provision of more speech therapy, and to offer advice to people on where they can go for help.

After the adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts, officers were elected for the coming year. Rod Cox, assistant education officer of The Spastics Society, was elected Vice-Chairman.

Following Lord Campbell of Croy, Tim Yeo MP, another Vice-President, stressed the importance of speech therapy because to many people speech impairment implies mental impairment.

The role of the voluntary sector, he believed, was to increase awareness and therefore concern among professionals, politicians and the general public.

Voluntary organisations need will power to tackle problems and increase resources but they are uniquely equipped to do so because they combine many different interests in one field — consumers, parents and professionals.

Voluntary organisations are able to innovate in a way statutory bodies cannot; they can

undertake research and monitor their findings; they can gather information and contribute to raising standards, he said.

Last year VOCAL received a grant of £60,000 over 3 years from the DHSS which has enabled it to set up a full time office.

In April, a VOCAL speech therapist joined the Under Fives Initiative Project in Hampstead organised by the National Council of Voluntary Childcare Organisations. The therapist works in the homes of speech impaired children under five, diagnosing, assessing and setting up a programme for each child which can then be followed through by trained volunteers. This relieves pressure on the mother to attend appointments.

In consultation with the Royal College of General Practitioners, VOCAL is planning to improve the knowledge of young doctors about the range of treatment that speech therapists can provide. It is also planning a project in a hospital in the South West which will research the value of intensive speech therapy across a number of specialties.

Rod Cox

VOCAL now offers individual membership at £10 per year. Further information from VOCAL, St Peters Office, South-Western Hospital, Landor Road, London SW9. Tel: 01-274 4029

CASTLE PRIORY

Psychologists on course?

This year's Short Course for Educational and Clinical Psychologists was well attended. Over 20 psychologists, together with a sprinkling of educationalists, therapists and doctors, met at Castle Priory for 2½ days in July to hear about the assessment and education of physically handicapped and brain damaged children. They were spurred on by the mass of problems and opportunities that have arisen over the past year with the implementation of the 1981 Education Act.

The Act represents a great landmark in the development of new attitudes towards children with special needs and services for them. Its emphasis on parental decision-making is in line with what The Spastics Society has always believed in.

The implementation of the 1981 Education Act is putting new emphasis on the correct assessment and education of children with special needs. Leslie Gardner, principal psychologist at The Spastics Society, reviews his course.

Professor Klaus Wedell (London University Institute of Education) made the important distinction between special needs "within the child" (such as spasticity) and the more recent concept of "environmental handicaps" (such as poor teaching). In the past we have dwelt too much on the child's disabilities, and we must now concentrate much more on his environment, making clear statements about our teaching goals and the means of achieving them, combined with a precise assessment of progress.

Freddie Green (ex-Staff Inspector, Department of Education & Science and now the Society's Director of Education) discussed the thorny question of the extra resources that are

inevitably required when a child's special needs are fully spelled out.

The group then concentrated on special topics.

I talked about psychological assessment and looked at ways of measuring intellectual abilities and disabilities in children with severe physical and communication difficulties. We must no longer confuse physical with intellectual handicaps or sensory with emotional ones — all of which need different forms of help.

David Hall (Consultant Paediatrician at St George's Hospital and The Spastics Society) spoke on paediatric assessment, advocating a move away from medical categories and labels towards a more functional assessment. He explained how to measure what a child can and cannot do so that effective therapy can then be specified.

Sheila Henderson (Research Lecturer, London University Institute of Education) described her work on "clumsy children". Physically on the borderline of normality, they may show minimal and subtle signs of cerebral palsy which are often mistaken for subnormality or emotional disturbance, and this can deprive them of necessary treatment.

Communication aids for the severely handicapped were discussed by one of the most expert teachers in this field in the UK, Edna Nicol (Head of the Communication Resource Centre of the ILEA's Charlton Park School). The market is now flooded with microcomputer based aids, she said, and good professional advice becomes essential if the right equipment is to be matched to the child and effectively used, rather than ending up collecting dust in a cupboard.

Mark Vaughan (Co-ordinator of the Society's Centre for Studies on Integration in Education) turned the group's atten-



Leslie Gardner

Two important participants at Castle Priory. David Hall (left), Consultant Paediatrician at St George's Hospital and The Spastics Society; and Freddie Green, The Society's new Director of Education.

tion to ordinary schools and described how they could be adapted to accommodate all kinds of children with special needs — provided the right attitudes and sufficient resources were forthcoming. His unit is busy monitoring integration and spreading knowledge of good practice.

Returning to children who need specialized help before even partial integration would be possible, the group were treated to a "tour de force" on Behaviour Modification for disturbed children from Malcolm Jones and Nina Story (Principal Psychologist and Head of the Beech Tree House units).

Although the Society (with central and local government support) is completing a second Beech Tree House at Preston, the demand is so great, they said, that local authority psychologists should seriously think about setting up a unit in their own areas. These would keep the child closer to his family and community and allow closer work with the families in preparation for their child's return. The present Beech Tree units could then concentrate on training staff from all over the UK in Behaviour Modification techniques.

On the final afternoon, the psychologists heard about another specialised system, Conductive Education. Lillemor Jernqvist (Senior Educational Psychologist, The Spastics Society) also described her recent research into the role that

language plays in encouraging better motor control.

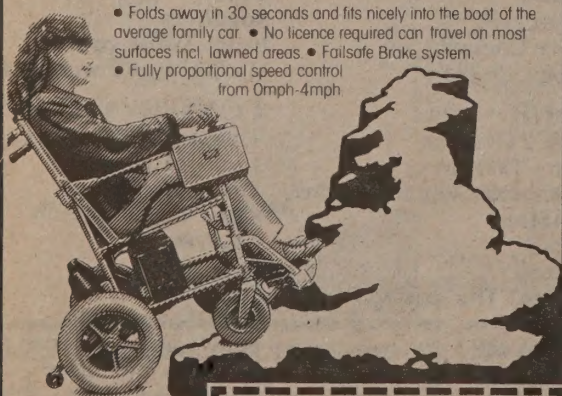
Richard Tomlinson (Headteacher, Thomas Delarue School) completed the proceedings with a close look at the end product of our assessment and educational work — the school leaver.

The school leaver often remained over-dependent on adults due to "chronic over-protection" both at home and at school. The approach at Delarue is to give responsibilities to students and then encourage them to use their own resources and risk failure. Plenty of confidence and skill building techniques are available at Delarue, such as the theatre workshop and the independent flat for older adolescents where almost complete autonomy is encouraged. But there is no substitute for what Richard Tomlinson called "discomfort in learning".

Since, by that stage, the psychologists had spent a sweltering 2½ days huddled in a dark lecture room peering at videos and slides while the July sun blazed away outside, the point was readily taken!

A great deal of ground was covered on the course but, inevitably, some important topics suffered, such as family dynamics and counselling, curriculum objectives and teaching strategies. When next year's course comes round, the teething troubles of the Act's new assessment and statement procedures should have been settled, and more time will be available.

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From November 29th 1984 some long-term sick and disabled people will be able to claim a new benefit if they are unable to work and don't qualify for Sickness or Invalidity Benefit.

The new benefit is called Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA for short), and will be worth £21.50 a week, tax free. It does not depend on National Insurance contributions, and doesn't involve a means test.

SDA replaces Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension (NCIP) and Housewives' Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension (HNCIP). Everyone who already gets NCIP or HNCIP will be transferred to SDA automatically in November 1984.

The main difference between SDA and the present benefits is that married women will be able to claim SDA even if they are able to carry out normal household duties.

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For people
who are unable
to work
because of
severe mental
or physical
disablement



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People aged 50 or over and those aged 16 to 34 can get SDA from November 1984.

Those aged 35 to 49 cannot get SDA until November 1985, but should claim NCIP or HNCIP before 29th November if they are eligible. To find out more just send the coupon to:

DHSS Leaflets Unit, P.O. Box 21, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1AY.

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Severe Disablement Allowance ☐ NCIP ☐ HNCIP ☐

Indicate quantities required in boxes. (Please allow 21 days for delivery.)

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INTERNATIONAL

"It must be difficult to be disabled in a country where nearly everyone seems to be expert at windsurfing, hang gliding, pinnacle climbing or scuba diving."

Margaret Morgan goes Down Under

Before I joined The Spastics Society in September 1957 I had spent ten months in New Zealand with a few weeks in Sydney.

A return trip after my retirement seemed a good finale to my full-time career, and so I set off for Australia last September.

Although the four months were to be a holiday, I wanted to see the attitudes to disabled people on the other side of the world, and I was looking forward to contacting the spastics societies in New South Wales and Victoria and the many friends that I had made through the years.

I was given a warm welcome by Mrs Audrie McLeod, the Founder and Life Honorary Superintendent of the Spastic Centre of New South Wales. Richard Gray of the Spastic Society of Victoria arranged an interesting programme for me during my brief stay in Melbourne.

In both cities we had lively discussions. I also met several families with disabled children and was not entirely surprised to find that many of the problems facing them were similar to those facing families in this country, though the remoteness of some areas and the vast distances, especially in Australia, are difficult for us to imagine.

National and State provision is patchy, and finance for welfare services is getting tighter in both New Zealand and Australia, so that voluntary organisations are needed more than ever.

The Mosman Centre in Sydney — one of the first centres in the world for spastic children — is a fine old house with a large gar-

den, quite unsuitable for people with mobility problems, although I found it had an atmosphere and aura denied to most purpose-built modern centres. It is due to close soon, and the severely handicapped children will be placed in special units in neighbourhood schools, with the Mosman staff operating as a visiting professional team.

A few miles away, the complex at Allambie Heights is impressive and fully accessible. Centre Industries is the focal point, with two hostels and a school nearby. It is a large factory employing cp people with a wide range of disabilities as well as able-bodied men and women. There is a special production department for those who work at

a slower pace than other employees and also a personal development and leisure activities section for multi-handicapped adults.

The Spastics Centre of N.S.W. showed great interest in our Neath Hill Community Care scheme; it is planning to provide assessment and training in daily living skills, with opportunities for young people and adults to make more informed decisions about their own life-styles.

At the same time, it is recognised that some very multi-handicapped adults will always require hostel accommodation and that some disabled men and women prefer communal living.

Meeting parents' quite understandable desires for safe and secure futures for their disabled sons and daughters is not easy to reconcile with the disabled person's own wish to be able to take risks and experiment with different types of living — even if mistakes are made.

When an organisation is run by parents, security and long-term care can so easily take up a disproportionate share of the future planning.

Two members of the Board of the Spastic Centre of N.S.W., who are parents of young children with cerebral palsy, recently visited the UK and took back with them the Society's film, *A Shift of Emphasis*.

In Melbourne I spent a day visiting workshops and hostels run by the Spastics Society of Victoria.

I enjoyed afternoon tea with five cp ladies who share a comfortable home, one of the Socie-

ty's latest ventures in independent living. We had a very pleasant time, the only problem being that nearly all of us were called Margaret — a very popular name in Australia!

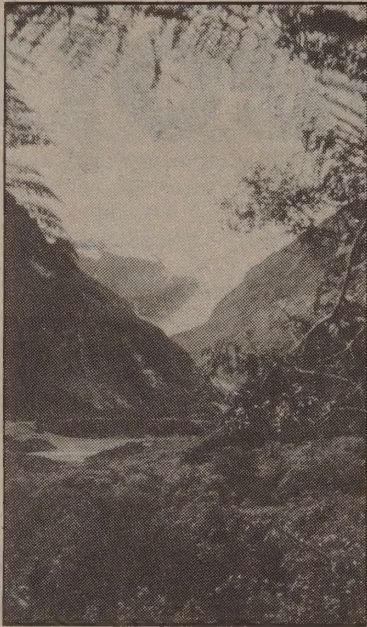
I also had lunch with a family whose daughter is both spastic and mentally handicapped.

A few years ago Elizabeth spent two happy terms at Dene College. Although Katoomba, where they live, is in a most spectacular setting in the Blue Mountains, facilities for young people with disabilities are limited and the family is planning to move back to Sydney where more services are available, even if there are long waiting lists.

I had a very special Outback trip to Central Australia and the Northern Territory.

After flying to Alice Springs, I joined a coach party for an eight-day trip through the desert areas, including a two-day stay at Ayers Rock.

This was one of the high spots of my holiday. Ayers Rock is far larger, more awesome and remote than any photographs can convey — though it is hot, very hot, and I did not feel up to the formidable climb up the Rock. I did, however, walk halfway



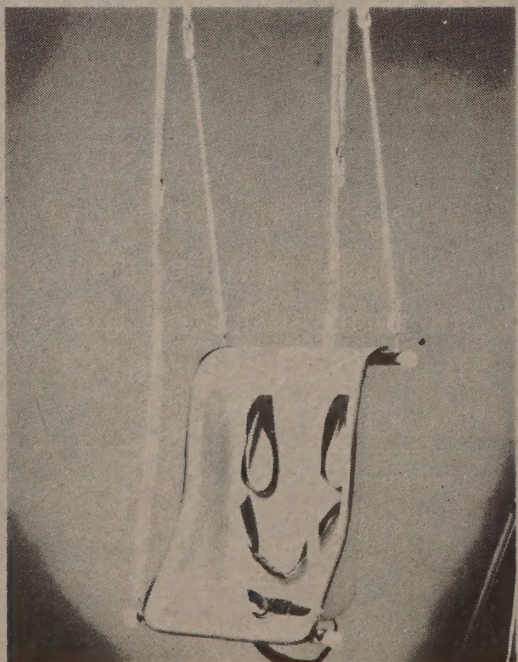
Fox Glacier in Westland.



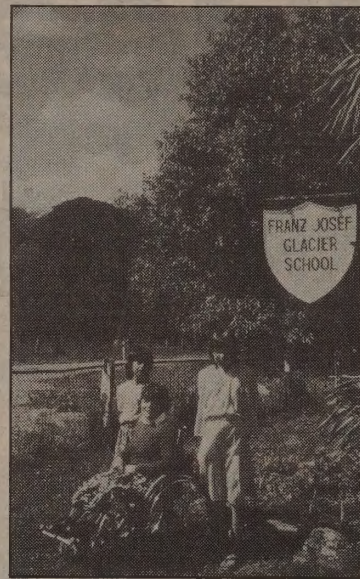
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Rachel Cross with her friends Toni Price and Janine Condon outside their school.

round the base, and that took me one and a half hours!

While in the Northern Territory I read that a support group had recently been set up for parents with handicapped children. My mind boggled at the thought of the many hundreds of miles of stony wastes that families would have to travel to meet each other and I could imagine how intense the feelings of isolation would be.

Children in these remote areas are educated through the School of the Air, and the Flying Doctor Service provides the medical and nursing care.

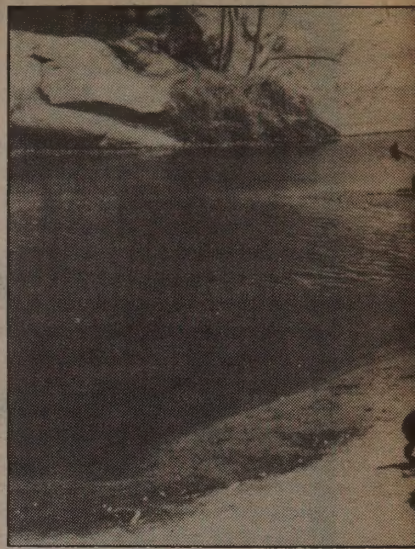
I visited the bases of both these vital services when I was in Alice Springs and was most impressed with all that I saw.

But for children with handicaps it may be necessary to live in a hostel near a suitable school and treatment centre. Although accommodation is available for parents to stay with their children, it cannot be easy to leave one's family and sheep or cattle station for long periods.

And what about aboriginal children who are handicapped? Many thousands of aboriginal families still live in remote areas, pursuing their traditional nomadic way of life.

My impressions of attitudes to people with disabilities in Australia are rather mixed.

I found it rather distasteful to



Aboriginal children playing by the

be approached in the street by people, both with and without disabilities, asking me to buy cards or pens for good causes. Their approach was more active, even aggressive, than we are used to here. Maybe they get better results — but do the ends really justify the means?

On the other hand I was impressed by a TV advertisement for the State Railway in which a family was featured. It was only at the end of the film that one realised that the youngest child had spina bifida. The impact was very convincing.

From Christchurch, New Zealand, the friends with whom I had stayed in 1956 took me back to Hokitika and the West Coast of the South Island.

This is a superb area, with the Alps stretching southwards to Mount Cook on the one hand and the turbulent Tasman Sea with native bush growing to the shore line on the other.

We visited the glaciers and lake district and I was delighted to meet 13 year-old Rachel Cross, who has spina bifida and was well integrated into the small school in the tiny settlement of Franz Joseph Glacier.

Life in both Australia and New Zealand is lived outdoors for much of the year. It must be quite difficult to be a disabled young man or woman in a country where nearly everyone seems to be expert at wind surfing, wave surfing, hang gliding, parachute water-skiing, pinnacle climbing or scuba diving.

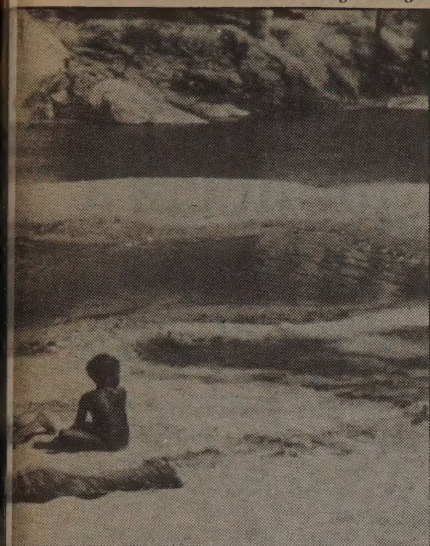
There are, however, organisations and individuals who are committed to the creation of new and exciting activities for people with disabilities. One of these is Joyce Lavender, the National Recreational Organiser for the New Zealand Crippled Children's Society, who for some years worked with Bill Hargreaves developing recreational activities for people with cerebral palsy in the UK.

It is good to know that in both New Zealand and Australia new ideas are being developed which will provide fuller and more interesting lives for those who have disabilities, and for their families too.



The staff of the Occupational Therapy Centre from the left is Lavina Ironside, and third from left is Jenny Sattler.

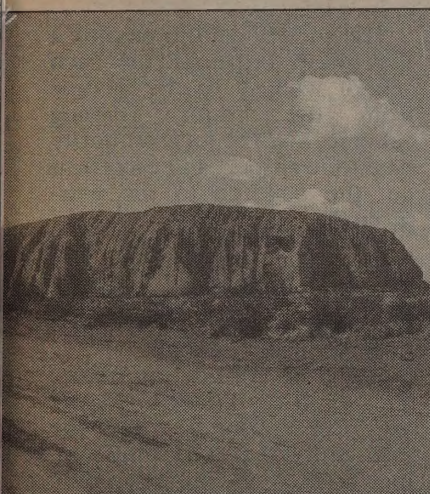
Margaret Morgan



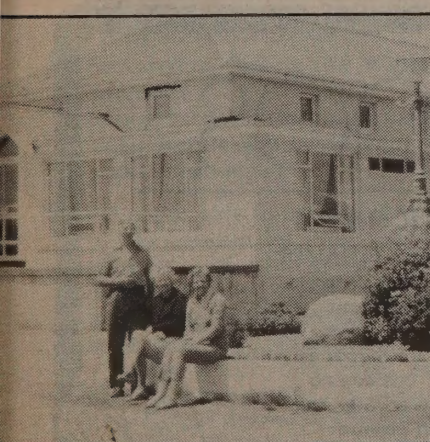
at Alice.



Margaret Morgan with Joy (left) and Beth (right) Black in their home at Umba.



Rock has a circumference of 9.7 metres and rises 335.5 metres above the



Margaret Morgan with her friends outside hospital in Hokitika where she worked in



Department at the Mosman Centre. Second worked at Fitzroy Square for several years, Occupational Therapist at the Centre.

Does the wheelchair service need a facelift?

Simon Crompton looks at some of the shortcomings of the Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres.

This is a crucial year for the Government's Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres (ALACs). A working party chaired by Professor Ian McColl, Professor of Surgery, University of London, is reviewing both the equipment provided and the system of supply of the DHSS-run service.

Several criticisms have already been voiced. An article in *The Guardian* on 25 July by Charles Smith, Senior Lecturer at Teeside Polytechnic, condemned the artificial limbs provided as inadequate, and so did subsequent letters.

In July, Alf Morris MP, asked a question in Parliament about ALAC's wheelchair service. Many therapists believe that the range is outdated and limited, and the system of supply is inefficient.

There has been a wheelchair service in Britain since 1915 when injured soldiers returned from the Great War. Now England's 22 ALACs supply wheelchairs free to anyone whose ability to walk is permanently impaired.

To obtain a chair a client must get an application form signed by a NHS doctor. This will be sent to the nearest ALAC which will deliver the equipment. The doctor may ask an occupational therapist or physiotherapist to assess the client and the access in his or her home, and to provide details of the most suitable wheelchair.

The wheelchair is then supplied direct to the client. If it is not suitable or has to be altered the client can be reassessed. In some cases a second chair can be provided if there is a proven need. And any chair is maintained and repaired free of charge to the user.

The DHSS's *Handbook of Wheelchairs and Bicycles and Tricycles* for professional staff says that "Stocks of the most commonly used wheelchairs are held at ALACs and can normally be supplied reasonably quickly, but some proprietary models and models requiring special features or modifications may take longer to supply."

"Quickly" means within 2 weeks in 90 per cent of cases, whatever the area, according to John Wylie, Higher Executive Officer on Policy of Wheelchair Supply at ALAC Headquarters in Blackpool. "If there are any modifications to be done it is very hard to say how long it will take," he says.

But The Spastics Society's Medical Advisory Committee, in its submission to the ALAC review, says that the standard and timing of the provision of wheelchairs and seating is uneven.

In a separate submission, the Society's Visiting Aids Centre and Aids and Equipment Department note that their staff have experienced great difficulty in obtaining non-standard wheelchairs. The have found that unnecessary delays have occurred in arranging essential adaptations to standard wheelchairs because the necessary information from ALAC technical officers has not been available.

They also say that the wheelchair issued is sometimes inappropriate when people are not individually assessed either by an occupational therapist or the technical or medical officer at an ALAC. At present, assessment by an occupational therapist is not required unless specifically re-



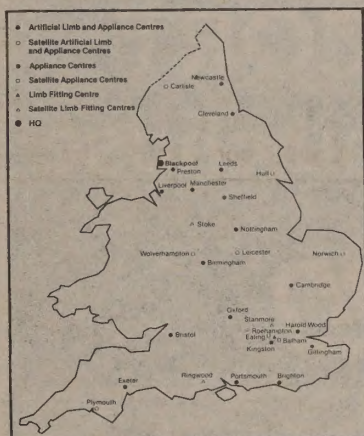
DHSS model 13J - a foldable pushchair.

quested - and for those applying direct to their GP this is the exception rather than the rule.

This, they conclude, can waste time, money and resources, and could be avoided if a proper assessment were carried out and enough detailed information forwarded to the ALAC before issuing the chair.

Most of the wheelchairs in the ALAC range are manufactured according to the Department's specification. But there are some built by manufacturers like Everest and Jennings, and Newton (The Spastics Society).

The wheelchairs available include rigid, folding, lightweight, indoor, outdoor, reclining backrest and one-arm drive models as



ALACs in England.

well as pedal or hand-propelled tricycles.

Some of the accessories available on standard chairs are: detachable armrests, desk armrests, elevating legrests, inclined backrests, backrest extensions, rear wheels set back, foot steering, pneumatic tyres, waterproof capes, trays, crutch holders, capstan handrims, extended brake levers and harnesses.

The range of mobility products for children includes buggies, pushchairs (including those designed for children wearing frog plasters), children's wheelchairs, trolleys (which enable children with disabilities such as spina bifida to play at floor level), bicycles with stabilisers and tricycles.

Parents are eligible to receive a pushchair from the DHSS as soon as the disabled child is 6 months old. And twin buggies can be obtained by families with a disabled child providing both children are 6 months or older.

ALAC wheelchairs for both children and adults have been labelled antiquated.

A letter in *The Guardian* last month said that "ALAC specialises in the heaviest and least manoeuvrable models on the market and steadfastly refuses to supply the more attractive and adaptable types of wheelchair which, sadly, are usually manufactured abroad."

The Society's VAC and AED agree. They say this is true espe-

cially of children's wheelchairs and tricycles. For example, ALAC does not supply a pushchair with adequate adjustable foot support, or one which will accommodate the child in a correct seating position.

They also feel that the DHSS standard models lack versatility to perform the wide variety of daily functions required by people who are totally dependent on a wheelchair.

A major bone of contention is electric wheelchairs. Although ALACs do provide an indoor occupant-controlled electric wheelchair and an outdoor electric wheelchair which can be operated by an assistant, they do not provide an occupant-controlled outdoor electric wheelchair.

A campaign called "Chips" (Campaign for Handicapped Independence in Propelled Seats) has just been launched in Sheffield which aims to persuade the Minister of Health, Kenneth Clarke MP, to introduce one into the ALAC range.*

As the Society's VAC and AED put it, "This is something which is frequently requested by many people who cannot afford to buy an electric wheelchair and who cannot, without one, achieve the very desirable level of independence an electric wheelchair would provide."

It is, they think, particularly necessary for disabled drivers who cannot use a self-propelled wheelchair.

To improve the ALAC's provision of all appliances, The Society's MAC recommends that they

*see next month



The Explorer, for children with frog plasters.

should be incorporated into the National Health Service with wheelchairs available from one hospital in each district. This would allow the skills of the staff to be more widely deployed and disseminated and would improve the standard and timing of provision.

It is impossible to tell whether such major changes will be considered in the ALAC review. Minister for the Disabled, Tony Newton MP, has expressed confidence that the working party is conducting "a full and comprehensive review".

Charles Smith, in his *Guardian* article, expressed doubts. There was little chance of the review determining the true nature of the changes that need to be made, he said, if the evidence and members of the working party came mostly from within the DHSS.

Whatever the outcome of the review, the wheelchair service is running its own study groups which include occupational therapists and physiotherapists. They are considering redesigning the wheelchair prescription form, various aspects of wheelchair design, the adequacy and needs of therapists training for the wheelchair service, and ways of best using finance and skills at local level. They hope to have their first results in October.

The wheelchair service is also developing a new wheelchair to fill the gap between wheelchairs for adults and wheelchairs for children. This will have field trials later this year, and could be available by the end of 1985.

STREAMLINER

FROM

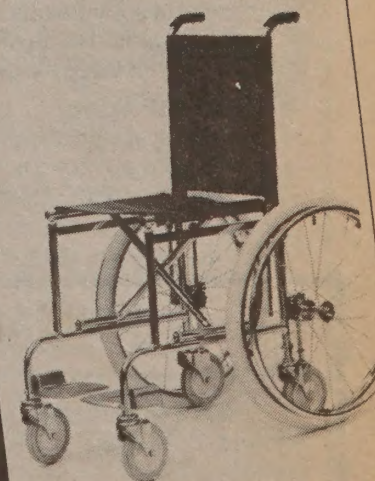
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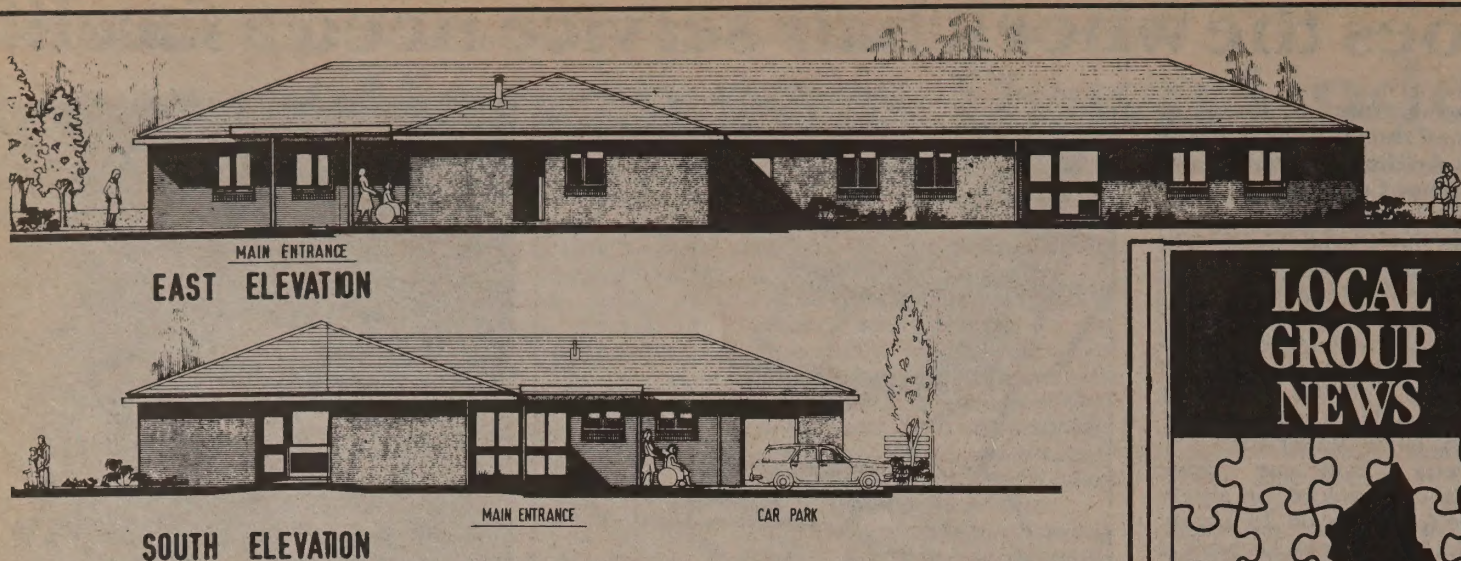
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NEWTON

SERVICES TO DISABLED PEOPLE FROM THE SPASTICS SOCIETY





A new residential development in Stockport

The diggers moved in on 23 July to begin Stockport, East Cheshire and High Peak Spastics Society's residential development at Cheadle.

The centre, costing £250 thousand, will consist of 8 bedrooms for long-term residents and 4 for short-term.

"We've a tremendous need for short-term care in the area," says Rodger Harvey, Chairman of the Stockport Society. "What the social services provide is insufficient for the type of disability we cater for. We want to give relief to families."

The society, which already has a school and adult day care centre at Heaton Moor, has been working closely with Stockport

Borough Council who leased the land to them on a 60-year basis.

At the moment the council has

Rodger Harvey



The Mayor and Mayoress of Stockport (extreme left and right) cut the first turf for the residential development on 23 July. Staff from Marks and Spencer, Stockport, presented a cheque of £16,000.

to place many people who need long-term accommodation outside the borough. So they will be financing the placing at the new centre, although the Stockport, East Cheshire and High Peak Spastics Society will have some say on who takes the long-term accommodation. Loans and grants of £200,000 have already been pledged by various organisations towards the building cost. Marks and Spencer and Barclays Bank have both sponsored a bedroom.

"We don't anticipate having empty beds for long after we've opened," says Roger Harvey. "We may run at a loss for a little while, but by the second year we should be self-financing."

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LOCAL GROUP NEWS



Edited by Simon Crompton

East Anglian Daily Times



A busload of youngsters enjoy the sun and the ride at The Ipswich Fete and Gala in Christchurch Park, which attracted 10,000 people and raised around £1,400 for the Ipswich and District Spastics Society's Wellington Work Centre.

Shropshire Society pioneers a summer playscheme

A summer playscheme for disabled children initiated and funded by Shropshire Spastics Society has been a resounding success.

It will be repeated and extended.

"We're absolutely delighted," says Chris Coombe, secretary of the society. "The children enjoy it and the parents find it a great help - they can get away for a breather in the summer holidays now."

The playschemes, which ran for 3 days a week from 23 July until 17 August, were held at the two Shropshire special schools - the Katharine Elliot School in Shrewsbury and the Thomas Parker School in Telford.

Concerned about the strain put on parents by long school holidays, the society proposed the scheme to the two head teachers who jumped at the idea.

"Everyone has been most enthusiastic" says Chris Coombe. "And the children wanted to come every day."

The society paid to employ a play-group organiser for each school backed up by people from the Youth Training Scheme. And the local authority paid for transport and escorts to get the children to the play-groups.

The total cost to the local group will be around £800.

Next time they hope to extend the schemes to children outside the two schools.

"We'll be considering having another in the Easter holidays," says Chris Coombe, "but the main problem is in the long summer holiday, and we'll certainly be running another summer playscheme next year."

Thames

tilt and relax pushchair

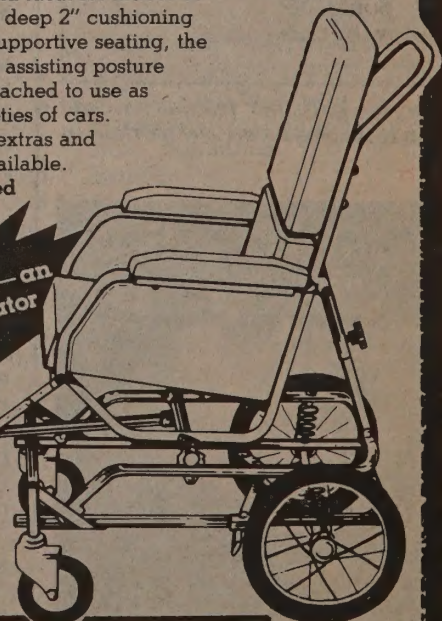
Attractive, stylish and colourful, the THAMES - tilt and relax pushchair is especially suited to the severely handicapped child and young adult. Its 12" rear wheels and front swivel castors make it easy to manoeuvre and ideal for indoor as well as outdoor use. Its deep 2" cushioning provides comfortable supportive seating, the seat itself tilts back 25° assisting posture and can be quickly detached to use as a car seat in most varieties of cars. A supportive range of extras and accessories are also available. Approved and supplied by the DHSS.

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OUTLOOK

Theatre

Abel's Sister

In the opening scene of *Abel's Sister*, Laura and her husband Howard wander around the stage as if in a trance. At first I attributed this to bad acting, but this lack of emotion and genuine feeling is an important characteristic of them both throughout the play.

Laura (played by Philomena McDonagh) spends her time planning a feminist Utopia, while Howard (Stephen Oxley) designs posters for trendy radical causes. They pride themselves on their progressiveness, but when Howard's disabled sister Sandra (Linda Bassett) comes to stay with them in their comfortable Somerset cottage, they are clearly unable to cope.

These two closeted intellectuals are actually about as aware as an alcoholic at closing time. Laura is too busy struggling with Leibniz's monads and other philosophical conundrums to take any notice of what Sandra says, even though Sandra's solutions are far more simple and practical than anything Laura can come up with - "I can't understand generalities," Sandra says.

Howard ignores her too. He is conscious of oppression everywhere in the world except on his own doorstep - it never occurs to him that Sandra might be oppressed, nor that he himself could be partly responsible for it. He is like a tedious born-again Christian, always ready with an empty cliché to cover up a genuine problem.

Things are complicated further by the appearance of Chris (Jay O Sanders), a good ol' boy from Oklahoma who has bought a cottage nearby. Sandra strikes up a friendship with him and isn't at all disconcerted to discover that he used to be a fighter pilot in Vietnam. In fact his own emotional and physical disabilities help to cement their rela-

tionship, until the selfish and hypocritical Laura decides to get in on the act.

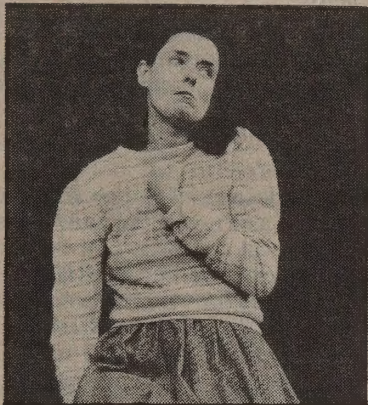
Sandra is not particularly likeable but she is easily the strongest and most interesting character, totally lacking in sentimentality. Her perception of the world is very revealing, and the best lines in the play are hers.

But the other performances are convincing too, and *Abel's Sister* is much more than a play about a disabled woman. It's a complex drama about how people relate to each other, and disability in the broadest sense.

It doesn't make for a very comfortable evening out, but I'm glad that I didn't miss it.

Edward Fenton

Author of award-winning novel
Scorched Earth



Linda Bassett as Sandra

Tour Dates

September

- 13-15 Battersea Arts Centre, London
- 17-18 National College for the Blind, Hereford
- 19-20 Jacksons Lane Theatre, London
- 21-22 Secombe Centre, Sutton
- 24 Padgate Recreational Centre, Warrington
- 25-26 Abraham Moss Centre, Manchester
- 27-29 Wilde Theatre, Southill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell

October

- 1-6 Birmingham Rep. Studio
- 8-9 Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead
- 10-11 Seagull Theatre, Lowestoft
- 12-13 Premises, Norwich Arts Centre, Norwich
- 15-16 Fermoy Centre, King's Lynn
- 17-18 University of East Anglia Drama Studio, Norwich
- 19-20 Wells Centre, Wells-Next-The-Sea

Further information from the Royal Court Theatre. Tel: 01-730 2554.

Books

Access in London

by Gordon Couch and William Forrester
(Robert Nicholson Publications, paperback £2.25 from all good bookshops).

Even the idea of getting from A to B in London, let alone exploring places of interest, can seem daunting to those who have difficulty in getting around or problems such as deafness or age.

Some of the difficulties can now be alleviated by obtaining a new Guide, *Access in London*. It is written by Gordon Couch, an organiser of the Pauline Hephaistos Survey Projects (survey teams of disabled and non-disabled people) and William Forrester, himself in a wheelchair and a registered London Guide specialising in trips for the disabled.

No stone was left unturned in exploring London life - theatres, cinemas, restaurants, historic buildings, hotels, markets, parks. The sporting enthusiast is catered for, too.

Valuable information is divulged, such as how to get into museums and art galleries when all you see confronting you at the main entrance is a flight of stairs. One learns that there is a stair lift at St Paul's Cathedral! Most important, the book includes a Good Loo Guide.

William Forrester's experience as a guide is evident in the

way he divides London into areas that would be feasible for a day's tour.

Every method of transport to and around London has been investigated - land, sea and air.

Since the wheelchair symbol can be somewhat ambiguous when indicating suitable facilities for people with disabilities, the book uses an explicit code of symbols which has been translated into other languages.

Bold maps have been prepared by BP.

The Guide is refreshingly honest about technical barriers and attitudes.

Lucidly written, it is obviously the result of thorough investigation and will be very useful to supplement conventional guides - I shall certainly be thumbing through its pages frequently.

Merle Davies

Aiming High, the story of Margaret Price

By David Hunn
(Arthur Barker, 1984, £7.95, hardback)

The account of Margaret Price's adjustment to life as a tetraplegic and her sporting achievements makes a very enjoyable and absorbing book. It is peppered with amusing, even hilarious, anecdotes, and the text is complemented by cartoons.

I would think that any disabled person, or an able-bodied person who has had dealings with the disabled population, would find familiar chords being

A direct line from Yolande

"It's good to have a hand in your own affairs," said Sandra, the articulate, disabled, "difficult" girl in *Abel's Sister*.

30-year-old Yolande Bourcier, on whom the character is based, is having that experience now. After years of institutional living, the last 9 of them at the Society's Princess Marina Centre, she has seen a play she helped to make come alive on the London stage.

Abel's Sister opened at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs last month, supported by a grant from the Society.

Yolande has been staying in London to attend rehearsals, previews and the gala performance.

"Each night it's different," she said. Why? "Audience reaction."

It was Yolande's initiative which led to the play. Attending a course at a college of further education, she heard about the Arvon Foundation which runs courses in the arts.

One holiday she took herself to Yorkshire for a course on experimental theatre and there met David Sulkin, a director of the Royal Court. He encouraged her to write a play and through him she met and worked with the professional playwright,

Graeae's celebration of ability

Recently several organisations have emerged which generate awareness of the need for people with disabilities to think positively. Just as black people needed to be proud of their racial difference in order to assert themselves, so too have disabled people developed a political consciousness and self-pride.

This pride was the foundation for the Graeae Disabled Artists' Day at Covent Garden on Sunday, 12 August.

struck in them - I certainly did on more than one occasion!

David Hunn goes into detail about Margaret's disability and how it restricts her "normal" life, as well as how she and Frank have surmounted the problems of Margaret being on four wheels rather than two feet.

He has captured Margaret and Frank Price's dry humour and their determination to make a go of it in any field. Even when meningitis halted her active participation in sport, Margaret merely diverted her activities to coaching youngsters, passing on her enthusiasm for sport.

There are a few acid remarks about public transport and other things, such as access to public places like cinemas, but generally they are tinged with a humour which must have originated from either Margaret or Frank, since it is not the type of humour usually found in the repertoire of able-bodied people.

After reading the first few chapters of *Aiming High*, some people might well say that here was a "brave woman", but the truth of the matter is that she is just a person who will not sit down and say "I give up".

The book is one which, if you are like me, you will chuckle through - much to the frustration of anyone else in the room. But it is also one which will make you wonder why so few disabled people are dedicated athletes and why those that are are regarded as oddities by everyone, including their peers.

Helen Aveling



Yolande Bourcier

Timberlake Wertenbaker.

After several false starts, *Abel's Sister* emerged, written by Timberlake and incorporating material supplied by Yolande.

"My writing tends to be very spontaneous, very direct, and fills at most 2-3 pages," explained Yolande. "You don't get much out of it, but you get a direct line from me."

For uninitiated readers, Graeae is a disabled artists' theatre company. This year's event was the second of its kind and it certainly deserves more attention and credit.

Sunday in Covent Garden is a natural focus for artists of street theatre, but once a year it becomes a show-place for some remarkable artists. It is disputable whether they are remarkable despite or because of their disability, but whichever it is, their talents speak for themselves.

The highlight of this year's Artists Day was Nina Falaise whose interpretation of "Send in the Clowns" showed great sensitivity, musicality and complete artistry. Jag Plah, the M.C., didn't announce that Nina was deaf before her performance. For me her art is remarkable in its own right, but I wonder, did people's appreciation depend upon this knowledge? I doubt it.

There were other memorable

performances such as the poetry from Thomas Delarue School and Julie Mimmack. And Frankie Armstrong's haunting singing included a song by Micheline Mason imploring disabled people to come together and "cast off" society's restraints. This day should have proved our worth to the audience.

Watch out for the next Celebration of Ability in August 1985; it is inspirational and highly enjoyable.

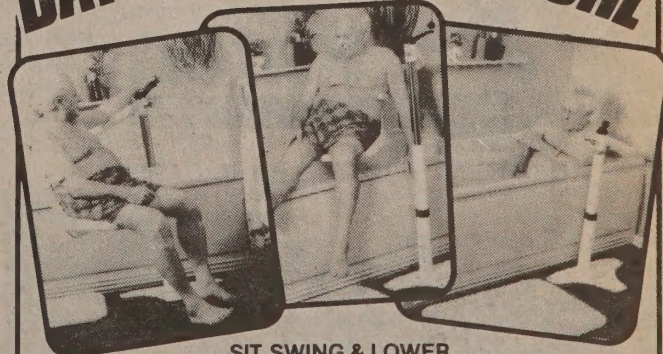
Mary Wilkinson

Chris Davies

Corrections

In last month's motoring column, we said that the Bantstead mobile assessment unit would be at Dundee and Glamorgan from 5-10 November. This should have read Dundee and Glasgow. Last month's review of Jeffrey Tate at the Barbican was written by Joy Kiddie.

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Share Your Problems

With Margaret Morgan

Focus on housing schemes

"I have heard about Focus housing for disabled people but I can't find out exactly what it means or whether there is any accommodation in my area. I sent for some information about Habinteg and a few other housing schemes but I don't see any reference to Focus. Can you explain just what it means and let me know where I can get a list of Focus developments? Incidentally, I am disabled and would need some personal domestic help every day."

It can certainly be confusing with so many schemes with special names, all of which seem to have slightly different services to offer.

To put the record straight it is Fokus, not Focus, to which I think you are referring. This is a Swedish term, though it is now used in a general way in many European countries for a particular blend of accommodation and personal care for people with disabilities.

Habinteg Housing Association (Habinteg is a composite word made up from "habitation" and "integration") was set up by The Spastics Society in this country some years ago and there are now a number of similar schemes all over the United Kingdom.

The original Fokus scheme in Sweden provided specially adapted flats for people with disabilities within a much larger apartment block. Personal care and domestic help are available by arrangement and on request and many of the tenants are severely disabled.

Variations of the Fokus scheme have been introduced in different parts of the country and the Community Care scheme at Neath Hill, Milton Keynes is one example in which The Spastics Society is involved.

An increasing number of somewhat similar projects are now being run by some local authorities and other voluntary

organisations and in connection with some housing associations. For various reasons these schemes are operated in slightly different ways and at present the demand is much greater than the supply.

With the increasing emphasis on community rather than residential services, however, the situation should improve and I am giving you the address of an agency which is monitoring and registering developments in this field.

I suggest that you should also talk to your local Social Services Department about your special needs and ask them what facilities there are in your area and what is being planned for the future.

You may also find it helpful to have a few details about Habinteg and other similar housing associations. Most schemes have a small number of flats or apartments within a much larger housing complex which are specially designed for disabled people and their families. Habinteg employs a Community Assistant in each development who is available to assist disabled tenants in an emergency or with occasional practical jobs. Regular personal and domestic help is not normally available through associations, though in some areas the local Social Services Departments will provide assistance, either directly or through the Community Services Volunteers' Independent Living Scheme.

Facilities and services vary considerably from one area to another and it is well worthwhile finding out what is available in your own and in neighbouring areas as well.

I do hope that you will soon find something suitable for your needs.

Centre on Environment for the Handicapped - Register of Housing/Care Schemes for Physically Handicapped People, Kings Fund Centre, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NF. Tel: 01-267 6111 ext. 245.

Community Service Volunteers Independent Living Scheme, 237 Pentonville Road, London N1. Tel: 01-278 6601.



Nigel Tuckett

"If you have any queries or problems that you would like explored do please write to me c/o Disability Now."

Who can help me buy a microcomputer?

"I am rather interested in computers, but I left school some years ago and it wasn't such a popular subject in those days. I am now in my late twenties and I am quite disabled, with not much control of my hands. I am sure, however, that I could learn to use a microcomputer and this would help me in many ways. I could keep in touch with my friends much more easily and I have several hobbies where a computer would be useful. Who knows, I might even be able to do some work at home?"

Can you advise me how to get some training, and how to get help in buying a microcomputer, including the adaptations that I will need to use it myself? I have some savings but not really enough to meet the whole cost."

Yes, indeed, computer studies is now an important subject on the timetables of all types of schools. In fact, some parents are having to do some private swotting in order to keep up with their children!

Many children and adults with disabilities have learnt to operate computers most successfully and I am sure that you would be able to manage one too.

There are a number of specialised organisations offering advice to disabled people about suitable equipment and training courses and I think that your best move would be to get in touch with the National Bureau for Handicapped Students who will be able to give you full details of these organisations. You may also like to contact your local Education Department, asking for information about day and short residential courses in computer studies.

A new bursary scheme has recently been established to provide financial help to young people with a disability who need microcomputers in their studies or training. COMET (Concerned Micros in Education and Training) is administered by the National Bureau for Handicapped Students from whom you can obtain the relevant information.

I understand, however, that there may be some restrictions as the bursary scheme is primarily intended for people who need a microcomputer for continuing a course of education or training, or to explore work opportunities, or as an aid to communication.

I am sure that it would be well worth your while to find out the details and I do hope that you will qualify for a bursary.

The Spastics Society has spe-

What's On

Courses at Castle Priory

The Bereweke Skill-Teaching System is the first nationally available training workshop on this method of delivering regular, individually programmed skill-teaching to mentally handicapped people. It will be presented by the system's joint authors. 12-14 October. Tuition £38 (plus £30 for complete set of materials), residence £36.

"Learning with Rebuses" Workshop provides an opportunity for teachers using rebuses to make basic teaching materials from the equipment supplied in order to meet the needs of young or immature learners. 3 November. Course, lunch and refreshments £15.50.

Technology with Disabled Children and Adolescents is a multi-disciplinary course with workshops. It is concerned with the wide range of technical aids and microcomputers being developed for communication, learning and leisure for the young disabled person with a physical or mental handicap. 4-9 November. Tuition £90, residence £90.

Play and Leisure Aids for Disabled Children is a practical weekend following the technology course, to enable participants to develop skills in making or adapting their own play or leisure aids for children with disabilities. 9-11 November. Tuition £30, residence £36. (If the two courses are taken together, tuition is £100, residence £108).

Implications of the Mental Health Act (1983) is a discussion programme for residential and field social workers, administrators in hospital, local authority and voluntary services. Parents and staff of any discipline welcome. 19-21 November. Tuition £25, residence £36.

For more information about any of these courses write to Castle Priory College, Thames Street, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 0HE. Tel: 0491 37551.

Conferences and Leisure

Countrywide Workshops, a registered charity marketing high-quality goods made by disabled people, is holding an exhibition of its products on 14 September from 4-9pm at the Guildhall, London. Lord Attlee, John Cox, Brian Rix and Ian Bruce will all be present. Tickets, including wine and buffet, £15. Countrywide's new catalogue will be at the exhibition and is also available from Valerie Wood-Gaiger, 17c Earls Court Square, London SW5. Tel: 01-373 9943.

A Conference and Exhibition for Disabled People will be held in St Crispin's Centre, London Road, Wokingham, Berkshire on 15 September. Speakers will include Philip Lewis of the British Sports Association for the Disabled, Alastair Kent of the Banstead Place Assessment and Mobility Centre, John Dobinson of the Access Committee for England, and Paddy Waring of Interface. Contact Mr J. T. Barnes, Wokingham District Council, Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berks. Tel: 0734 786833, extension 218.

Deaf-Blindness is the subject of the joint Sense (National Association for Deaf-Blind and Rubella Handicapped)/British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society to be held at Digby Hall, University of Leicester from 21-23 September. There will be a wide range of speakers and topics, and a display of equipment. Contact Carmel Perry, Sense, 311 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8PT. Tel: 01-278 1005/1000.

An Exhibition of Traditional Spinning and Weaving will be held from 22-29 September at the Jointure Studios, South Street, Ditchling, East Sussex. Admission £1 at weekends, 50p in the week (children and unemployed half-price). Proceeds go to the Eastbourne and District Spastics Society's hydrotherapy pool. Contact Paul Meijer. Tel: 0273 778229.

The Third International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Handicapped Persons will take place in Orlando, Florida, USA from 29-31 October. Further information from Professor William G. Bell, Co-ordinator, Third International Conference, 648 Bellamy Bulding, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306, USA.

The Development through Art and Design of People with a Mental Handicap is a course organised by the University of London Institute of Education and the Royal College of Art in collaboration with MENCAP (London Region) and Shape. The introductory weekend is on 16-17 November at the Royal College of Art. There will also be workshop sessions and exhibitions. Cost £90. Application forms (to be completed by 24 September) from the Academic Registrar, University of London Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. Tel: 01-636 1500; or MENCAP. Tel: 01-253 9433.

cial funds available from which grants can be made to help purchase equipment if the total cost cannot be met from other sources. If your disability is due to cerebral palsy you may like to get in touch with the Social Services Division of the Spastics Society, who will be pleased to advise you.

Best of luck with your enquiries.

National Bureau for Handicapped Students, 40 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ. Tel: 01-278 3459.

British Computer Society (Specialist Group for Disabled People), 13 Mansfield Street, London W1. Tel: 01-637 0471.

Neath Hill Professional Workshop, 1 Fletchers Mews, Neath Hill, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK14 6HW. Tel: 021-427 3182.

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If you are interested in any of these please contact Peter Granger, 3 Oakley Close, Church Road, Hanwell, London W7 3BQ. Tel: 01-567 0434.



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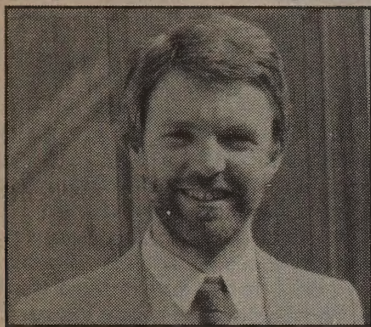
PEOPLE

Malcolm Matthews, 32, is the new SRO for the South-East. He started on 20 August.

"I want to get the region re-established," he said. "There is a need for someone to stay in post for a period of time to build it up."

His previous job was co-ordinator for the Birmingham Young Volunteers, and he is still chairperson of the National Working Party of Young Volunteer Organisers, whose main aim is to develop self-help and self-determination among young people.

Nigel Tuckett



Stephen Suart started as Fund Raising Manager at The Spastics Society on 13 August.

Aged 42, he has been Managing Director of four Yorkshire companies, and in 1979 he founded a leading direct response mail order company.

"My role is to develop and maximise on the Society's trading activities," he says. "I also hope to introduce some new activities, such as direct response marketing."



Betty with old friends - Pat Mayhew (left), ex-Head Teacher at Thomas Delarue, and Tony Diamond, Secretary of the Society.

Long-term survivors

"The end of an era" was how both Betty Adams and Annie Anderson described their departure from The Spastics Society at their joint party in July.

Betty Adams, Director of Education, had survived for 9½ years, and Annie Anderson for 16, 6 of them as Betty's secretary.

John Cox acknowledged Betty's meteoric rise from assistant education officer to being "one of the fulcrums of the Society".

"What's that, John?" she interrupted.

"When I asked people to think of Betty," he said, "you would be astounded at the words they used!" He went on to list loyalty, workaholic, effervescent, personality, and the fact that she would be missed.

"Even directors have their headmistresses... my love to my headmistress," he said, presenting her with a microwave oven wrapped in silver and a flower arrangement.

"I'm not crying my heart out," said Betty Adams, triumphantly. "But I'm going to miss you all."

Earlier, of her work with the Society, she said, "I'm rather proud to be associated with our educational establishments, which I believe are the leaders in

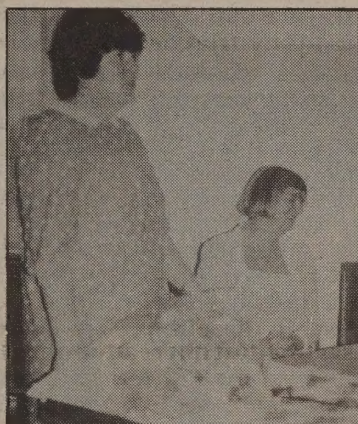
special education and will hold their place in years to come."

Asked what she would do now, she replied, firmly, "Nothing."

Annie, by contrast, is moving on to a high powered job closer to home, as secretary to the Dean of the post graduate medical centre at Charing Cross Hospital.

John Cox spoke of her "devoted service to the Society," and presented her with a picture and a bouquet.

"It's been drama, laughs and a million miles of tape!" she commented.



Annie's turn to reminisce about old times.

Biking round Britain for Beech Tree

Steve Gill started pedalling on 12 July. Three weeks later he had covered 3,000 gruelling miles.

Steve, who is a teacher in remedial subjects at a Liverpool school, was raising money for The Spastics Society's Beech Tree House (North) Appeal on his Round Britain Cycle Ride.

Beech Tree House North will be a school in Chorley for handicapped children with behavioural problems. The appeal aims to raise £150,000.

The regional groups which supported Steve have already raised £1,000, and many sponsor forms have yet to be returned.

On his way round Britain, Steve, with his back-up team of Steve Mee, Denis Glover and Steve Murphy, visited 20 of The Spastics Society's centres and 2 Scottish Council for Spastics centres where he was given hospitality ranging from beer to baths.

John Roberts of Western Region even greeted him on the Severn Bridge with a cup of tea.

Having taken in Lands End and John O'Groats Steve finished his marathon at Ellerslie Court Holi-



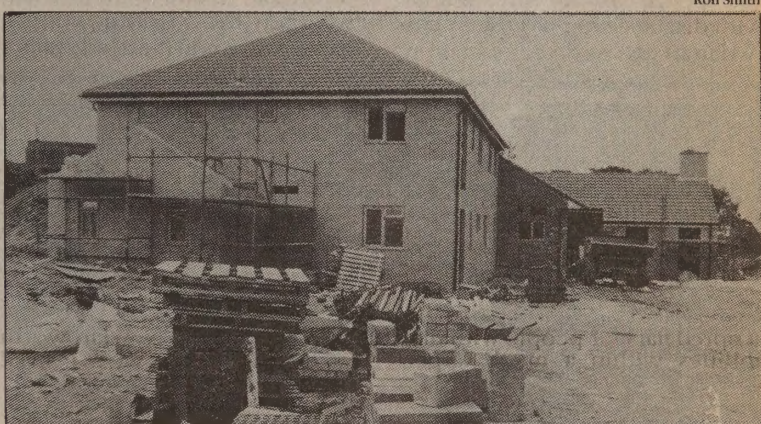
Steve Gill celebrates with champagne at Ellerslie Court. Joan Williams, North West Regional Chairman, pours and Connie Creighton, President of the Southport and District Spastics Society, holds the tray.

day Home for the Disabled in Southport, and enjoyed a welcome home garden party organised by Southport and District Local Group.

Representatives from the local group, North West Region and Beech Tree House were all there to greet him as well as staff and visitors from Ellerslie Court, volunteers from Crosby Office and many friends and well-wishers.

Donations should be sent to the Beech Tree House North Appeal, Freepost, Preston PR1 9BR.

Ron Smith



The half-complete Beech Tree House North at Clayton-le-Woods near Chorley.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Society's Visiting Aids Centre will be at the following towns in September and October. 3-8 and 11-14 September, Brecon; 17-22 and 25-28 September, Swansea; 15-20 and 23-26 October, Merthyr Tydfil; 29-3 and 6-9 November, Cardiff. For confirmation and more information please contact the VAC officer, 16 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 5HQ. Tel: 01-387 9571

The Interdisciplinary Association of Mental Health Workers has been launched, aiming to stimulate mental health workers to act together for the benefit of people suffering from mental disorders. It includes members from the psychiatric, social and voluntary services and hopes to promote policies and research into mental health. Membership £5 p.a. Further information from Nicholas Ragg, Department of Educational Studies, University of Surrey, Guildford GU2 5XH. Tel: 0483 571281

The ICAA Art Competition for 1984/5 will include able-bodied children for the first time. Sponsored by Pritt Stick Adhesive, it now has two sections - one for handicapped children throughout the UK and one for classes of children under 12 from ILEA schools. Closing date end of March 1985. An exhibition of the combined work is planned for November 1985 in the Royal

Festival Hall. Entry packs are available from Art Competitions, ICAA, 126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SB.

Incontinence is the title of the latest Churchill Livingstone Patient Handbook. Written by R. C. L. Feneley and J. P. Blannin in an easy-to-understand style, it provides information on various forms of urinary incontinence, aids and appliances, and further reading. Price £1.40. Published by Churchill Livingstone, Robert Stevenson House, 1-3 Baxter's Place, Leith Walk, Edinburgh EH1 3AF. Tel: 031-556 2424

Ask Handbook. A new handbook for parents of sick or handicapped children in Norfolk is now available, providing a comprehensive guide to health and welfare facilities, social services and voluntary groups in the area. It is compiled by a group of Norfolk parents who established the ASK Information Service. There is no charge, but contributions are requested. Contact ASK, Gaffers Cottage, Grange Farm, Spixworth, Norfolk. Tel: (0603) 51061/898190

The Greenwich Association of the Disabled has just opened a new information centre run by and for disabled people at St. Mary's Church, Greenlaw Street, Woolwich, London SE18. Tel: 01-854 7289. As well as providing information on facilities and aids, GAD wants to offer people a

chance to explore new ideas and meet others informally. Open Monday to Thursday all day, Wednesday morning only.

Suggestions and comments are welcomed by Anne Pearson, director of a project investigating how museums, theatres, cinemas and arts centres can meet the needs of disabled people. She is consulting widely, and her recommendations will be published under the title *Arts for Everyone*, covering all types of disability. Contact Anne Pearson at Nuffield Lodge, Regents Park, London NW1 4RS. Tel: 01-722 4406

Access Guides to Milton Keynes, Peterborough and Redditch are now available from RADAR, 25 Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AB. Prices 75p, 45p and 25p respectively.

National Key Scheme for Toilets for Disabled People. The standard NKS lock is now fitted at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, London, and at Liverpool Lime Street Station. A full list of toilets covered by the scheme and keys (price £2) can be obtained from RADAR's Housing/Access Department, 25 Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AB. Tel: 01-637 5400

Unmet Needs of Handicapped Young Adults is the report of the European Collaborative Committee for Child Health of the Children's Research Fund. Summarising needs in education, medical services, financial provision, employment and

housing, it urges integration, allowing disabled young people to use their independence skills and make decisions for themselves. Price £1. CRF, 6 Castle Street, Liverpool L2 0NA. Tel: 051-236 2844

Piano Tuning and Maintenance for Disabled People. The London College of Furniture is running a two year course on tuning and maintaining pianos starting in September, funded by the MSC. Applicants, who need not be registered disabled, should have normal hearing and be mobile. Contact David Horn, London College of Furniture, 41-47 Commercial Road, London E1 1LA. Tel: 01-247 1953

Grants for Groups of Disabled Young People in London. As part of International Youth Year, the GLC and the ILEA are making funds available to groups of young people (aged 11-25) for 1985. Applications should be made for projects which will contribute to the benefit of young people in London. Contact Roy Herbert, Room 679, County Hall, London SE1 7PB. Tel: 01-633 1237/8

Fleet Systems Limited have a number of coaches adapted for disabled people available for hire. Each has a tail lift at the rear, wheelchair restraints, and high standards of comfort. The coaches can be self-drive, in which case licences are required, or there are drivers available. For more information contact J. Nash, Fleet Systems Limited, Unit 2 Aldington Road,

Westminster Industrial Estate, Woolwich Tel: 01-854 1115

Children with Special Education Needs is the title of a series of 12 leaflets published by the National Elfrida Rathbone Society. They inform parents about their rights and responsibilities in meeting the educational needs of their children, especially in the light of the 1981 Education Act. The cost is 80p per pack of 12, available from the National Elfrida Rathbone Society, 11 Whitworth Street, Manchester M13 3GW. Tel: 061-236 5358

The Production Engineering Research Association (PERA) would like to hear from anyone with information on work situations where disabled people are employed, especially those where occupational aids are in use. They are undertaking a 2-year project to develop a Technical Information and Advisory Service on Occupational Aids. Contact David Daly, Project Leader, PERA, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0PB. Tel: 0664 64133

National Trust Booklet. The 1984 edition of *Facilities for the Disabled and Visually Handicapped at National Trust Properties* has been published with more entries than ever before. In the last year facilities have been improved in several of the Trust's houses and countryside areas. The booklet is available free on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope (minimum size 8½ by 4½ inches) sent to The National Trust, 36 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AS.

Sports facilities not up to the mark

"The London area is the worst area in the country for facilities for disabled sportspeople," said disabled athlete Sue Stevenson in the *Kingston Informer* last month.

Sue, who won 5 medals at this year's International Games for Disabled People in New York, said she had difficulty finding anywhere to train for field events around New Malden, South London. And she couldn't get any proper coaching.

Tony Honour from Merton, who was also in the British cp team in New York, has had problems training for wheelchair track events. At the moment he uses a tarmac path.

"Most of the clubs near me have cinder tracks, which is like pushing into quicksand," he said.

Tony believes sports like swimming and archery present fewer problems - there are various leisure centres disabled people can use. But even these have their drawbacks.

"I live just a quarter of an hour from the most wonderful leisure complex in Britain - Crystal Palace," Tony said. "I used to weight train there, but because the car park was so far away and there were so many steps, I had to rely on having someone with me to help. In the end I got fed up with making arrangements when to go."

But at Crystal Palace, built before the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1971, something has been done about access.

Using GLC and Sports Council funding, £25,000 has been spent over the last 5 years to enlarge showers, install ramps and toilets for the disabled, and build changing rooms on the same level as the swimming pool.

A £40,000 project to build a large access ramp from the parking area to the lower sports arena is now underway.

"And we have a succession of small projects to improve accessibility," said John Davies, Director of Crystal Palace, "But it's a very slow process."

In the future he hopes to install a lift and signposting to facilities for disabled people.

Brenda Stoner, South West London Area Secretary for the British Sports Association for the Disabled, says there are a number of specialist sports groups for disabled people in London.

"But it is very difficult to convince able-bodied people that disabled people can, and want to, take part in sports," she said.

12 months ago she carried out a survey of Sports Clubs in the London Borough of Merton. 90 clubs were asked if they had facilities for disabled people and whether they would be prepared to take disabled athletes. 5

replied.

"Some are not necessarily happy to take wheelchairs," she said. "The best thing to do is go to your local able-bodied club and work it out on a personal basis. And you might find willing coaches if you go in person."

Dr Bob Price, Director of the British Sports Association for the Disabled, sees getting proper training opportunities as a universal problem for disabled athletes.

"For too long sport and recreation for disabled people have been provided by people who know about disability but don't necessarily know about sport," he said.

"Now that disabled people take sport so seriously we don't want generalists. Only the elite among disabled sportsmen and sports-women get proper training."

BSAD is working on 2 complimentary schemes to help rectify this.

The Central Council for Physical Recreation runs an introduction to sport and fitness course for generalists, which the BSAD wants to provide for volunteers from sports clubs for the disabled.

BSAD is also working with the National Coaching Foundation to ensure that its coaching schemes for qualified coaches give them experience of disability.



Craig Hawkins proved himself a man of many parts. He raised money for drinks by armwrestling with the locals and then wrote a poem about the whole experience.

The great explorers

The first joint expedition of able-bodied and disabled scouts trekked 120 miles across Holland last month.

Five teams aged 16-20 had to plan and complete an expedition and carry out set projects to gain the Scout Association's prized Explorer Belt.

"We were very agreeably surprised how well they all got on

together," says Tony Christopher, Secretary of the Odiham and District Scout Fellowship and a supervisor of the boys in Holland. "We made very few allowances for the disabled scouts. It was pretty hard work. They helped in many jobs such as putting up tents, cooking, writing the log, booking into campsites."

Each team consisted of a disabled scout from the Endurance Venture Scout Unit at Alton, Hampshire, and two able-bodied scouts from Fleet and Totton Venture Scout Unit.

They travelled 10-20 miles each day, having adapted the wheelchairs specially so that they could be pushed comfortably with rucksacks strapped to the back.

Paul Clark from Eastleigh feels the expedition has given him a better understanding of able-bodied people.

"Previously I'd found it quite hard to mix with able-bodied people I didn't know," he says.

Paul's only problem was that the other boys sometimes didn't let him do enough. But on one occasion he persuaded them to let him go and fill their water bottles and when he returned, found he had forgotten them.

"I had to say 'You asked me to fill the bottles, but you didn't ask me to bring them back!'"

All the scouts gained their Explorer Belts when they finished their expedition on 19 August.

"It's a new thing for a disabled scout to get an Explorer Belt," says Paul. "I'm proud of it."

Have you got a good option?

The Working Party on Living Options for Severely Physically Disabled People, which is now preparing guidelines for local authorities and health authorities, is planning a follow-up giving examples of good practice.

It would like to hear from individuals or groups about successful living options, including ways of providing and funding personal care at home.

The Working Party is a joint venture between the Prince of Wales' Advisory Group on Disability and the Long Term and Community Care Team of the King's Fund.

Its 29 members comprise disabled people, representatives from organisations concerned with disability, such as The Spastics Society, and members of local authorities and the health services. Work on the guidelines began in April and is due to be completed in November.

Contact John Tizard, The Spastics Society, 16 Fitzroy Square, London W1P 5HQ.



Check and double cheque. £10,000 was donated to both SOS England and SOS Scotland after the Glenrothes Golf Show-Am tournament at the Balbirnie Golf Club on 15 July. The English and Scottish divisions of the Stars Organisation for Spastics each provided 10 celebrities to play local businessmen in return for the donations from the Glenrothes Development Corporation. The stars included Dickie Henderson, Bruce Forsyth, Johnny Briggs, William Powell and Gordon Brown. The presentation was at the Stakis Albany Hotel. From left to right: Reo Stakis, sponsor for the evening; Larry Marshall, Chairman, SOS Scotland; Sir George Sharp, Chairman of the Glenrothes Development Corporation; The Countess of Arran, President, SOS England; The Earl of Arran.

A better deal for Council jobs

To give disabled people a better chance in the jobs market, Hackney Council is guaranteeing interviews to anyone whose application has the backing of a nominated careers specialist.

Council policy up to now has been to interview all disabled applicants who meet basic job requirements. But many do not apply because they feel that stating their disability on a form hinders them, the Council believes.

Under the new system careers specialists and job agencies will be informed of vacancies and try to fit one of their clients to the job. Those they recommend will automatically get an interview.

If a disabled person's application is unsuccessful, Karen Buck, the Council's Disabled Person's Officer, can ask for a written explanation.

Lord Nelson needs £1 million

The Jubilee Sailing Trust starts to build its new £2 million square-rigger, the "Lord Nelson", next month. She will be the first offshore sailing vessel in the world designed for disabled people.

The "Soren Larsen", known from the BBC's *Onedin Line*, was successfully chartered last year, and will be used again for 1984 and 1985. But its design is not ideal for handicapped people.

The "Lord Nelson" will be the largest square-rigger built in the UK for 75 years, able to take 44 sailors (8 in wheelchairs). There will be lifts between decks, wheelchair tracks for stability on deck, audio compasses for the blind and signal systems for the deaf.

She should be completed by spring 1986 provided a further £1 million can be raised.

Disability Now

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